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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001131

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B.WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: PF ZAPU ENDS UNITY ACCORD

REF: HARARE 1115

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) PF ZAPU officially ended the 1987 Unity Accord with ZANU-PF at a conference in Bulawayo on December 13 and 14. Former ZANU-PF Home Affairs Minister and Politburo Minister Dumiso Dabengwa was elected as interim president of the party. PF ZAPU intends to compete in the next elections; for now, party leaders say it will support MDC's efforts to achieve an equitable power-sharing government and draft a new constitution. Dabengwa would like to become part of the SADC process and believes his ties to South Africa, particularly with Jacob Zuma, can help the MDC achieve credibility with SADC and South Africa. PF ZAPU's defection reveals another split within ZANU-PF and denies the ruling party exclusive possession of the liberation mantle, but the extent of its support remains to be seen. Poleconchief met with Dabengwa and former House of Assembly speaker Cyro Ndbeli in Bulawayo on December 15 to discuss PF ZAPU and its plans. END SUMMARY.

Dabengwa and the Reemergence of PF ZAPU

¶12. (C) Dabengwa left ZANU-PF earlier this year to support Simba Makoni's presidential candidacy in the March elections. He told us he had expected General Solomon Mujuru to also break ranks, and that Mujuru's support of Makoni could have dealt ZANU-PF a devastating blow. Dabengwa appeared bitter that Mujuru never publicly came out for Makoni; he said he was still waiting for an explanation from his one-time comrade in arms. As for Makoni, Dabengwa dismissed his current relevance to Zimbabwean politics. He said Makoni would never make a clean break with ZANU-PF and was still hoping to be called upon to succeed Mugabe.

¶3. (C) According to Dabengwa and Ndebele, the two-day PF ZAPU conference drew over 1000 people from all of Zimbabwe's provinces. Dabengwa was elected as interim party leader and Canswell Nziramasanga of Mashonaland West was elected as his deputy.

¶4. (C) Dabengwa said he had been motivated to leave ZANU-PF because PF ZAPU and its members had become marginalized after being forced into the 1987 Unity Agreement. Additionally, he had become repelled by ZANU-PF violence and distressed by its failure to tackle the humanitarian crisis.

¶5. (C) We asked Dabengwa why, in light of his disillusionment with ZANU-PF, he had remained with the party from 1987 until this year. Noting that he had been imprisoned for almost five years under Mugabe, Dabengwa said he joined with Joshua Nkomo to form the Unity government as it was the only way at the time to stop the violence against Ndebele, of which Gukurahundi, which killed about 20,000 people in the early 1980s, was the lynchpin. After joining ZANU-PF, Dabengwa, who served as an MP and Minister of Home Affairs until his defeat by the MDC's David Coltart in 2000, said he resolved to change ZANU-PF from within.

PF ZAPU's Plans

¶6. (C) Dabengwa insisted that PF ZAPU viewed itself as opposing ZANU-PF and not the MDC. It hoped to complement the

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efforts of the MDC. He objected to SADC's position that a GNU be formed with ZANU-PF and the MDC sharing the home affairs ministry--the MDC was entitled to equality as a government partner and all ministries should be discussed. In renewed negotiations, Dabengwa said he hoped for a seat at the table for PF ZAPU now that it was a constituted party, along with civil society which had so far been excluded from the process. The ultimate goal of PF ZAPU, according to Dabengwa, was to compete in the next elections.

¶7. (C) Touting the potential of PF ZAPU, Dabengwa said that his and other party members' liberation war credentials would prevent Mugabe from claiming, as he had with the MDC, that PF ZAPU was a tool of the West. Dabengwa also said he could be useful in helping to get South Africa to place pressure on Mugabe and ZANU-PF. He noted that he had excellent relations with Jacob Zuma; Zuma had invited Ndebele and him to lunch last week. The South African leadership in general, according to Dabengwa, was suspicious of the MDC and did not hold MDC leader Tsvangirai in high regards; nevertheless, Zuma in their lunch conversation had been more receptive to MDC criticisms of ZANU-PF than he had let on in his public statements.

¶8. (C) Dabengwa said he would be willing to collaborate with the MDC in opposing ZANU-PF and negotiating a transitional agreement, but had not yet talked with Tsvangirai. He commented that he had attempted to talk with him before the March elections to form a united opposition, but the MDC had been arrogant--it thought it could win on its own--and his interest had not been reciprocated.

PF ZAPU Support

¶9. (C) Gordon Moyo, the head of NGO Bulawayo Agenda and a strong Tsvangirai supporter who travels frequently throughout Matabeleland, told us on December 15 that the positive aspect of the reemergence of PF ZAPU was that it was another chink in the armor of ZANU-PF. On the other side of the ledger, ZANU-PF in Matabeleland, from which PF ZAPU would have to draw its primary support, was weak. Out of 38 Matabeleland MPs, only 4 were ZANU-PF members. Additionally, the new

leadership of PF ZAPU was tainted by its association with ZANU-PF and the fact that many of these leaders had engaged in violent activity.

¶10. (C) We also met with MDC-M's David Coltart on December 15 who agreed that the separation from ZANU-PF was harmful to the ruling party. He was more forgiving than Moyo of the past activities of PF ZAPU leaders; he remarked that any leader who had been a member of ZANU-PF was likely to be stained with violence. It remained to be seen whether PF ZAPU could develop support in Matabeleland. Nevertheless, Coltart, who served as one of Dabengwa's attorneys in the 1980's during his legal battle with ZANU-PF and the government, was suspicious of Dabengwa. He related that in 2000 his polling agent, a political activist named Paul Nyabanyana, was abducted and killed. Cain Nkala, a war veteran supportive of Mugabe, was arrested about a year later on suspicion of murder. Nkala subsequently admitted to Nyabanyana's murder and implicated ZANU-PF officials, including Dabengwa. Nkala was subsequently murdered. Coltart said there was a common belief in Bulawayo that Dabengwa was responsible.

COMMENT

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¶11. (C) Despite pretensions to be a national party, PF ZAPU's support, as at Independence in 1980, comes almost exclusively from Matabeleland. In Matabeleland, memories of Gukurahundi remain vivid, and as a result the MDC, particularly the Tsvangirai faction which is viewed as strongly anti-Mugabe and anti-ZANU-PF, has received strong support. We are therefore skeptical that PF ZAPU can become a major political force.

¶12. (C) The reemergence of PF ZAPU is significant, however, in that Mugabe can no longer exclusively claim the liberation mantle, and it represents public exposure of the ZANU-PF cracks that are known to exist. We believe it would be wise for Tsvangirai to reach out to Dabengwa to avail the MDC of association with PF ZAPU's liberation credentials, and also for help in dealing with South Africa. Experience suggests, however, that this will not occur.

DHANANI